Strategy Research Project
International Fellow

ASEAN Standby Force: Taking Southeast Asia Security to the Next Level

by

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Class of 2013

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	**2. REPORT TYPE**	**3. DATES COVERED** *(From - To)*
xx-03-2013	STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT	

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
ASEAN Standby Force: Taking Southeast Asia Security to the Next Level

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER

5b. GRANT NUMBER

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)
Colonel Bharat Tientongdee
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5d. PROJECT NUMBER

5e. TASK NUMBER

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
Mr. Allen D. Raymond, IV
Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)
U.S. Army War College
122 Forbes Avenue
Carlisle, PA 17013

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
Word Count: 6202

14. ABSTRACT

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15. SUBJECT TERMS
Regional Security, Security Collaboration

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			**17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT**	**18. NUMBER OF PAGES**	**19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON**
a. REPORT	**b. ABSTRACT**	**c. THIS PAGE**			**19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER** *(Include area code)*
UU	UU	UU	UU	38	

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

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Report Date:	March 2013
Page Count:	38
Word Count:	6202
Key Terms:	Regional Security, Security Collaboration
Classification:	Unclassified

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is often viewed as an irrelevant regional organization that fails to live up to its charter and has no institutional teeth. This is due to the “ASEAN way” of pursuing consensus among member states that lack mutual trust and coherence. An “ASEAN Standby Force (ASF)” would be a medium for ASEAN nations to improve their relationships while simultaneously increasing ASEAN’s collective capability to address security affairs. The ASF would initially begin as an on-call emergency response force for natural disasters, monitoring in support of conflict prevention, maritime observation, humanitarian assistance, and peace support operations. Subsequently, a more robust ASF with standing organizations could be employed in other scenarios including conflict resolution. This paper analyzes the utility and prospects of an ASF and provides recommendations for its development.

ASEAN Standby Force: Taking Southeast Asia Security to the Next Level

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), comprising ten Southeast Asian countries, has existed for more than 40 years since its foundation in 1967. The security-related accomplishments matters of this organization, however, have not been as successful as they may have been. Operating on the principles of consensus and consultation, the regional body has lacked the necessary coherence, mandate, and institutional teeth to enforce its principles of multilateralism and non-use of force regarding security issues, including those related to territorial and maritime disputes.[1] Asia-Pacific countries in general are loath to attempt preventive diplomacy or other more assertive forms of security collaboration;[2] coupled with its inherent passivity and the lack of trust and confidence of the member states, the ASEAN security mechanism has progressed at a snail's pace.

To lay a keystone of trust and confidence for the organization's foundation, ASEAN should emulate other regional organizations in other parts of the world and implement modest collaborative security arrangements that are more influential than the current token pattern of annual meetings and discussions. An ASEAN Standby Force formed by the military and national security services of the member states would be an effective measure to accomplish this. Such a Standby Force would not be intended to accelerate an arms race in the region, but rather to promote cooperation, trust and confidence between the ASEAN members and also foster collaborations with other international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU) and sub-regional organizations including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In addition to supporting the ASEAN member states' contributions to

international peacekeeping efforts, this Standby Force would help bring organizational cohesion to ASEAN and provide practical future benefits to its security mechanism.

Background

With the end of the cold war, the world has been relieved of the protracted confrontation between the liberal world leader, the United States of America, and the communism front runner, the Soviet Union, as well as periodic conflicts between their proxy countries. However, any envisioned peaceful “new world order” was brief indeed. The end of the cold war essentially released smaller countries from a bipolar superpower strait-jacket, and intra-state conflict dynamics also became ascendant. The dramatic change from the confrontation between the cold war rivals into a more multi-polar world with more countries pursuing autonomous policies and greater international standing. International, regional, and sub-regional organizations such as the UN, AU, European Union (EU), Organization of American States (OAS), and ECOWAS have also played a more prominent role, to include in a variety of areas including security.

ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the original members (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand). Subsequently, Brunei Darussalam joined on 7 January 1984, Vietnam on 28 July 1995, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up what is today the ten member states of ASEAN.[3]

ASEAN’s history can be divided into three phase: the initial period of 1967-1975 when its members were cautiously feeling their way towards closer cooperation and there was more talk than actual substance; the second period of 1975 -1978 when ASEAN began to coalesce into an increasingly vigorous body; and, finally, the period

from 1975 to the present when its activities have become palpably forceful and effective, particularly, as noted in political affairs.[4]

The first significant circumstance that drove ASEAN's nations together was the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region in 1975 when the last chapter of the Vietnam War came to an end, the second circumstance was the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December 1978, which dramatically threatened regional stability and underscored the need for ASEAN member states to work together.[5] The concept of security collaboration was not the first attempt of the Southeast Asian nations, as the first such effort, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), was formed in 1954 as a result of U.S. initiatives.[6] This U.S. initiative brought together the U.S., United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines under the Manila Pact of 1954.[7] This concept was not attractive to other Southeast Asian nations besides Thailand and the Philippines, and as a result the initiative was aborted a few years later.

Other drivers included superpower influence and the so-called "domino theory." Southeast Asia's economic potential and geo-strategic location attracted superpower interest and desire to shape the region in a fashion that coincided with their own global security interests. However, indigenous pressures to formulate the regional security concept of in support of the regional countries' own interests became more acute.[8] The "domino theory," first articulated during Eisenhower's Presidency, argued that if the first domino is knocked over, then the rest would topple in turn. Applied to Southeast Asia, it posited that if South Vietnam was taken by communists, then the other countries in the region such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia and Indonesia, would

follow.[9] These factors directly or indirectly helped unite the original ASEAN nations in order to mobilize their unity of effort against the threat of Communism.

The ASEAN Community is comprised of three pillars: the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC); the ASEAN Economic Community; and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.[10] APSC is the security or defense mechanism of ASEAN, and aims to ensure that countries in the region live at peace with one another and with the world in a just, democratic, and harmonious environment.[11] APSC's tools include: the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR); the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF); the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM); the ASEAN Law Ministers Meeting (ALAWMM); and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC). Most address region security through annual meetings. For example, the ADMM is the highest defense mechanism within ASEAN[12] and allows the Defense Ministers to exchange views on current regional defense and security issues.[13]

The ARF is one of the most prominent venues for multilateral and bilateral dialogue and emphasizes decision-making by consensus, non-interference, incremental progress, and moving at a pace comfortable to all.[14] The ARF includes non-ASEAN countries, and its objectives are to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern and to make significant contributions to confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region.[15] The 27th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting (1994) stated that "The ARF could become an effective consultative Asia- Pacific Forum for promoting open dialogue on political and security cooperation in the region. In this context, ASEAN should work with

it ARF partners to bring about a more predictable and constructive pattern of relation in Asia-Pacific".[16]

Besides ARF, other forums that include non- ASEAN members are "ASEAN plus three" (ASEAN + 3) and "ASEAN plus six" (ASEAN +6). In order to achieve ASEAN interests securely and effectively, non-ASEAN stakeholders are welcome to discuss security and related issues with ASEAN members. This allows relevant external nations to voice their opinions and consequently can enrich the Asia-Pacific regional community environment. These forums have addressed issues including the Asian financial crisis, food and energy security, human trafficking, and drug trafficking, to name but a few topics. Table 1 depicts the participation of non-ASEAN countries in ASEAN forums.

Table 1: Non-ASEAN Member in Each Forum

	ARF	ASEAN + 3	ASEAN+6
Australia	x		x
Bangladesh			x
Canada			x
China	x	x	x
EU	x		x
India	x		x
Japan	x	x	x
Mongolia			x
New Zealand		x	
Pakistan			x
Papua New Guinea			x
Russia			x
Sri Lanka			x
Timor- Leste			x
United States			x
Republic of Korea		x	

Since the end of the Second World War in 1945, comprehensive regional security has been a common interest of the ASEAN member states, and the APSC is the main pillar to achieve it.[17] The APSC blueprint envisages a rules-based community of shared values and norms; a cohesive, peaceful, stable and resilient region; a shared responsibility for comprehensive security; and a dynamic and outward-looking region in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world. Full implementation of this blueprint is expected to bring about prosperity in the region and would protect the interests and well being of ASEAN populations.[18]

Notwithstanding any aspirations that may exist regarding ASEAN's security potential, it was not the ASEAN's first priority when it was founded. As stated in the Bangkok Declaration, its main purpose is to accelerate economic growth.[19] Nor does ASEAN have much contemporary impact on security affairs. ASEAN's annual regional security meetings mostly discuss various concepts but lack the mechanisms to transform those concepts into practical application.

As viewed by the international community, ASEAN's security role is minimal as the organization and its member states cannot intervene, criticize, or even give advice to other nations concerning their internal problems. ASEAN has failed to deal with many internal and external disputes and conflicts, such as that between Thailand and Cambodia over the ownership of Preach Vihear, a 9th-century Hindu temple, and the 4.6 sq km surrounding area.[20] The conflict has triggered a military build-up along the border and periodic clashes between Cambodian and Thai soldiers have resulted in the deaths of troops on both sides. The United Nations has futilely endorsed ASEAN's active

efforts in the matter and encouraged the parties to continue to cooperate with the organization.[21]

Another example was Myanmar's Depayin crisis in 2003, when a group of the Union Solidarity Development Association attacked a National League for Democracy (NLD) motorcade at Depayin, killing four of Aung San Suu Kyi's bodygards and resulting in her return to "protective custody." After Syed Hamid, ASEAN's special envoy, met Myanmar's Foreign Minister and demanded a timetable for Suu Kyi's release, he reported, "they want [to release her] in accordance with our wish," and promised the setback was "only something temporary."[22] This circumstance shows that ASEAN can do nothing to prevent abhorrent policies by the member states and harms ASEAN's reputation as a whole. ASEAN's tepid response to the violence of the Burmese regime against its citizens is a major and continuing failure.[23] "Explanations for ASEAN's inability to more successful influence Myanmar over the last decade have shifted from accusations that the organization does nothing to live up to its on-paper commitments to the belief that what it does is wholly ineffective."[24]

From ASEAN's very beginning in 1967, three of the foundation members (Indonesia, Malaysia and Philippines) have had territorial disputes. The Indonesia-Malaysia *Konfontasi* ended with a change of government in Indonesia, but left lingering tension and uncertainties within the region.[25] Another example of ASEAN's ineffectiveness is the range of disputes over South China Sea islands, which ASEAN has shunted aside.[26] These and other examples demonstrate the inadequacy of the "ASEAN Way" for maintaining regional security. Asia has arguably become the most critical region in an evolving international order.[27]

Geopolitically, the region includes three of the world's great powers—China, Japan and India—and two others, the United States and Russia, lie on its periphery and interact with it extensively.[28] Extensive superpower presence in the same region has both advantages and disadvantages. The positive is that powerful countries may act as mentors to help other nations with development. On the other hand, On the other hand balancing power in the region is difficult and great powers often have divergent interests. There are many wicked problems in Asia and the Pacific, from border disputes to maritime issues over Exclusive Economic Zones. They impact the interests and strategies of every regional nation, and ASEAN should play a greater role in managing these issues. However, ASEAN's efforts have been fragmented from its inception. The multitude of religious, ethnic, and other identity groups in the member nations and different national visions and interests (including a pronounced reluctance to cede their sovereignty) further complicate any collaborative progress.

Asia- Pacific Security Issues

The Asia-Pacific region is an immense region including some 2.8 billion hectares of land area and more than 45 countries. It also includes important sea lines of communication including what is effectively the world's jugular. 85% of maritime commerce uses this route as a main sea lane of communication. A global hub of land and sea trade, the region contains several significant security issues including piracy, Thailand's southern insurgency, Burma, nuclear weapons, maritime issues, natural disaster, and others.

Piracy

Although the great majority of ships cross the region's sea lanes without incident, piracy is becoming more common. Worst affected is the area off mainland China, where

there have been allegations of official complicity.[29] Piracy, in this study, also includes violations of intellectual property rights. The Asia-Pacific is one of the world's regions that has a high rate of copyright infringements.

Insurgency in Thailand

The insurgency in the southern part of Thailand has been around for decades, but in 2003 escalated to unprecedented levels of violence due to Thailand's political problems and improved rebel access to communications technology. The Royal Thai Government worries that the insurgency will expand to an even larger scale and forge links to transnational organized criminal groups. A more effective ASEAN would be helpful in garnering the regional cooperation necessary to counter such groups.

Myanmar (Burma)

An ASEAN member since 1997, Myanmar is one of the most problematic member states. ASEAN has been largely ineffective in influencing Myanmar because of the organization's normative and institutional architecture and especially its lack of punitive sanction-based compliance mechanisms.[30] Recently, however, the Military Government has expressed a greater openness to democracy by releasing Aung San Suu Kyi, a Burmese opposition politician. After being detained in her own house for many years, she has been permitted to participate in political activities. While the people have been given more political freedom, the political atmosphere in Myanmar on the whole is still in the shadows, and Myanmar will be a challenging issue for ASEAN in the years to come.

Nuclear Weapons

Weapons of Mass Destruction have thus far not been an issue for ASEAN member states, as all regional nuclear programs are for peaceful purposes. However,

many countries surrounding the region have nuclear weapons capability and some non-state actors are pursuing nuclear weapons as well. There is no guarantee that the region can remain immune to nuclear weapons issues indefinitely.

Maritime Issues

The Asia-Pacific is the world's maritime commerce hub, with the Strait of Malacca one of the main sea lanes. Additionally, the regional countries (and others) have important fishing, energy, and underwater resource industries. All countries have an interest in access to the commons, and close regional cooperation is necessary to adjudicate claims.[31] Long-standing maritime disputes in the region include: the Senkaku/Diaoyu/Tiaoyuti islands (Japan, China, Taiwan); the Paracels (China, Vietnam, and Taiwan); the Spratly Islands (China, Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Vietnam and Taiwan). China, Taiwan, and Japan are not the only non-ASEAN parties to such disputes; South Korea has its own island disagreement with Japan.[32] The maritime disputes are intractable problems that could ignite at any time, and the challenge is how to manage these disputes to mitigate their impact to ASEAN member states and the broader Asia-Pacific region.

Natural Disaster in the Region

International disaster relief is increasingly significant in Asia-Pacific region, particularly with the impact of global warming. The region has become increasingly prone to disaster and must prepare to deal with catastrophes that kill more than 100,000 people each year.[33] ASEAN and other regional authorities must ensure that fully prepared disaster relief assets can respond promptly and robustly when needed.

Other Security Issues

China, Asia's most powerful country, has had significant economic and military growth. It is currently focused on securing access to resources, as is evident in its efforts to establish strategic relationships and build and expand port facilities from the Middle East to the Chinese coast.[34] In response, the U.S. has had to refine its policies toward China, in light of its growing economic might and military power in the Pacific.[35] In China, the government welcomed Mr. Obama's victory, but woven into the warm words from the departing President Hu Jintao was a warning that the United States should be a more cooperative partner as China, even with a slowing economy, continues to rise in wealth and power.[36] India, another key Asian power Asia, has considered engagement of ASEAN as a key national interest.[37] As a result, India will pursue good relationships with ASEAN, but this could cause discomfort in relations with China. New Delhi' s current interest is in asserting its strong, pragmatic leadership born out of growing relationships of economic interdependence and a possible Indian role in a U.S. effort to contain of China.[38] Additionally, in December 2012 North Korea launched a long-range rocket which challenged the world community and landed in waters east of the Philippines.

ASEAN countries spar over several territorial disputes and some face internal conflict. Indonesia and Malaysia have had a "Konfontasi" or "confrontation" in the border of east Malaysia in 1962, and Thailand currently is angry with Malaysia's alleged support to rebels in southern Thailand. Thailand and Cambodia have the aforementioned dispute over the Preah Vihear Temple and surrounding area along Thailand's eastern border, and Thailand has another border dispute with Laos which flared up in 1986-1988. Malaysia and Singapore have a long history of conflict over

water supplies. From 1968-1970 the Philippines and Malaysia were at odds over Filipino Muslims intending to invade Sabah.[39] Such conflicts are in part to blame for the member states' reluctance to see a more influential ASEAN.

ASEAN Integration

Nations are more willing to act collectively when doing so supports their individual interests, such as when the original nations formed ASEAN to pursue mutual economic and security interests. Min-hyung Kim has questioned why ASEAN's integration process of more than four decades has yielded a regional organization that is still incompetent. ASEAN has lagged behind the EU in deepening integration and policing members. The ASEAN members resist an EU-style integration in favor of an informal and flexible approach.[40] Unlike European integration in which formal rules and regulations have played an important role, ASEAN integration has been driven by informal ASEAN norms—musjawarah (consultation) and mufakat (consensus)—and principles—noninterference in domestic affairs, respect for national sovereignty and independence, and the avoidance of controversial issues.[41] This partially explains why ASEAN is still some distance away from realizing its potential as a successful organization. The political desire for deepening regional integration is not all that strong in the ASEAN nations.[42] Kim also discusses "Strategic-Preference Theory," defined as "states' primary goals in determining possible outcomes."[43] Strategic preferences drive state behavior in ways that are contingent on the strategic environment.[44] This theory points out that the perspectives on ASEAN integration could shift when the environment changes. State perspectives may respond relatively quickly not just to the degree of economic interdependence among themselves but also to external shocks, such as a

global or regional economic crisis or a sudden shift in the global political economy that threatens their economic growth and political stability.[45]

Ralf Emmers and See Seng Tan argue that the ARF has failed to evolve from confidence building to preventive diplomacy because ASEAN's strict adherence to sovereignty and non-interference principles contradict any effective implementation of the latter.[46] Shaun Narine pointed out that "ASEAN ability to shape the security of the larger Southeast Asian region has been limited by two factors: (1) the decisive role of powerful states in setting the parameters of regional interaction; and (2) the divergent interests of the individual ASEAN states when defining their own regional interests."[47] All of these factors will continue to affect the evolution of ASEAN's regional security role in the post–cold war era.

In "The Rising Powers and Collective Security in Southeast Asia," Colonel Michael Mahy contends "It is unlikely that nations will pursue any meaningful collective security mechanism across all countries in such a volatile environment unless the region is threatened directly and then it is likely that arrangements will be ad-hoc."[48] This certainly reflects the security environment in Southeast Asia. ASEAN countries are different in vision, history, religious belief, national interest, to name but a few dimensions. No significant common physical threat exists to bring them together and fight as a regional entity, and therefore it is a great challenge to their collective security cooperation. As Jorg Friedrichs notes, "In principle, peaceful change as enshrined in the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) has always been one of ASEAN's core missions. In practice, however, there are very few cases where this has actually worked out. During the cold war, ASEAN was successful only once, to a

significant extent, in managing peaceful change. This was in the 1980s, when the organization was instrumental in preventing a further escalation of the situation created in 1978 by Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia and the concomitant displacement of the Khmer Rouge to eastern Thailand."[49]

ASEAN Policy and Doctrine

As previously stated, ASEAN's primary role is economic. The founding members agreed that "the achievement of political stability and continuity required sustained economic growth and the reduction of poverty.[50] The economic agenda has since remained ASEAN's first priority of ASEAN; consequently, economic collaboration has been more focused and has advanced further than collaboration in other sectors. With functional regional economies, the nations should bolster regional security and stability to ensure the populations' well-being is not jeopardized.

ASEAN is relatively unique and renowned for its consensus-based practices, as reflected in Article 2 of the ASEAN Charter; "ASEAN and its Member States shall act in accordance with the following [principle};… non-interference in the internal affairs of ASEAN Member States...."[51] ASEAN will be formally integrated into one organization in 2018 in order to carry out its activities in a coherent and comprehensive endeavor.[52] However, critics are skeptical about the integration's success, as the organization will still appear to lack the clear vision, verified common interests, and an external threat that would forge them together.

ASEAN is projected to achieve a "Unification" stage in 2015, but many observers are likewise doubtful that it will produce tangible results or that ASEAN will be any more influential than it has been in the past forty years. ASEAN integration will not progress as rapidly and substantially as many of its leader claim unless there are remarkable

developments that affect the underlying preference of ASEAN states, such as a significant increase in intra-ASEAN trade and investment, a much stronger pressure from domestic businesses for deeper integration or external shocks that threaten ASEAN economic growth.[53] ASEAN will have to create new levels of cooperation to deal with common issues and to earn the trust and support of the member states, incorporate their perspectives, and promote coherence and unity.

Several elements of the UN Charter are relevant to regional organizations with security-related aspirations. These especially include Chapter VI (Pacific Settlement of Disputes); Chapter VII (Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace and Acts of Aggression); and Chapter VIII (Regional Arrangements). In situations outside of self-defense, the UN Security Council can essentially authorize regional organizations (or coalitions) to take action, as the African Union has done in Darfur, and Somalia.

Chapter VIII encourages regional security mechanisms to deal with threats to peace and security regionally, provided their activities are consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN.[54] It also advocates settling local disputes, including those referred by the UN, through regional mechanisms before bringing them to the security council.[55] However, the Charter cautions that any enforcement action by a regional organization must be authorized by the Security Council."[56] While the UN Charter gives room to regional and sub-regional organization to manage security affairs, the United Nations still holds the authorization for peace enforcement.

Other Regional Security Arrangements

European Union

The EU originated from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) of six countries, which was formed in 1951 to unite European countries economically and politically in order to secure lasting peace.[57] Today, the European Union includes 27 states and comprises three pillars: (1) European Communities; (2) Common Foreign and Security Policy; and (3) Police and Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters.[58] The second pillar is the main section to deal with regional security issues. The Balkan conflicts in 1990's revealed the insufficiency of the EU's security capabilities, and it was eventually supplanted by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces.

Although primarily economic in nature, the EU clearly addresses regional security as well. In fact, EU military forces have also been committed to Africa. "[T]he European Union shall play its full role on the international stage. To that end, we intend to give the European Union the necessary means and capabilities to assume its responsibilities regarding a common European policy on security and defense.… The Union must have the capacity for autonomous action, backed up by creditable military forces, the means to use them, and a readiness to do so, in order to international crises without prejudice to actions by NATO."[59] The EU is prepared to manage the use of military forces and address regional security issues independently of NATO.

The EU has its own land, air and naval forces, support group, and command and control unit. The member states have agreed to put at the EU's disposal, on a voluntary basis, forces capable of carrying out operations of up to army corps level (50,000 to 60,000 troops) with the necessary command, control and intelligence capabilities, logistics, other combat support services and, as appropriate, air and naval elements.

The force should be able to deploy in full at this level within 60 days, with its deployment sustainable for at least a year.[60]

The African Union (AU)

The African Union evolved from the previous Organization of African Unity (OAU) which was established in 1963.[61] The AU aims to promote the unity and solidarity of African states; coordinate and intensify their cooperation and efforts to achieve a better life for the peoples of Africa; defend their sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence; eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa; promote international co-operation, giving due regard to the charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and co-ordinate and harmonize members' political, diplomatic, economic, educational, cultural, health, welfare , scientific, technical and defense policies.[62]

The AU includes a security mechanism, derived from the Cairo Declaration, which established the OAU Mechanism on Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution.[63] As stated in paragraph 15 of the Cairo Declaration "…[i]n circumstances where conflicts have occurred, it will be [the Mechanism's] responsibility to undertake peacemaking and peace building functions in order to facilitate the resolution of these conflicts. In this respect, civilian and military missions of observation and monitoring of limited scope and duration may be mounted and deploy"[64]

The security mechanism is to manage regional conflicts in order to support development in the African countries. The AU or the five African sub-regional organizations have committed military forces on several occasions and are in the process of creating five Standby Brigades.

Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS)

A sub-regional organization, ECOWAS promotes economic integration in "all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial question, social and cultural matters...."[65] Its political objective is to maintain peaceful relations among West African countries. Economically, ECOWAS helps the nations surmount their disadvantages as small economies and pursues balanced economic growth among ECOWAS members.[66]

While intended to make its member states more economically developed as part of a larger entity, ECOWAS has also had to confront the reality that many of its member states face or have faced some form of conflict.[67] ECOWAS has a security mechanism intended to address conflict in its nascent stages with the provision of military forces as needed.

Most notably, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was committed to Liberia from 1990-2000 and also deployed to Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau.[68] It marked marks the first time the international community supported a humanitarian intervention by a regional organization.[69]

The ASEAN Security Force: Addressing ASEAN's Central Security Problem

With respect to its security contributions, ASEAN has largely been unsuccessful, especially when compared with other regional and sub-regional organizations around the world. If the 2015 and 2018 milestones regarding ASEAN integration are to have any significance, the organization must prepare to implement tangible measures that can have a positive impact. Regional collaborative on peace and security issues is the primary missing factor of the ASEAN equation. One way to fill this gap, and nurture

progress towards a more integrated ASEAN, would be to create an ASEAN Standby Force (ASF).

Similar in nature to the collective military capability developed by other regional and sub-regional organizations, the would promote security collaboration among the nations member in ASEAN, support regional interests, improve security in a significant geostrategic area, facilitate efficiency, interoperability, and unity of effort, and enhance any contributions by ASEAN's member states to international peacekeeping efforts. In addition to addressing security issues, the ASF would provide much-needed capacity for effective disaster relief. The ASF could support military functions such as doctrine development, equipment procurement, training, and exercises. It would also be an effective conduit to the military components of other international organizations such as the UN, NATO, AU, and others.

The ASF should be composed of military (land, sea, and air), law enforcement, and civilian components to flexibly operate across the entire range of military operations. This multi-dimensional structure would allow the ASF to seamlessly engage in any operational environment. Such seamless integration would be vital to mitigate potential friction in potential areas of operation.

In deference to the "ASEAN way," the ASF should begin modestly with an initial focus primarily on humanitarian assistance and support for external UN peacekeeping missions. This would avoid tensions that could arise because of sovereignty concerns and would not contribute to regional arms races. Nor should it antagonize superpowers that might otherwise see the ASF as a counter to their influence.

Initial priority capabilities for the ASF should include medical, engineer, maritime observation, anti-terrorist and counter-drug assets to deal with common concerns of Southeast Asian nations. Any infantry forces or other combat capabilities would primarily be intended for security of other ASF assets. Law enforcement assets would enable the ASF to address drug trafficking and human trafficking issues effectively. Relevant civilian expertise could be seconded from ASEAN or member states and integrated in the ASF as appropriate for specific circumstances.

Creating the ASF

Initially, the ASF would be an emergency response force for specific circumstances such as natural disaster response, monitoring in support of conflict prevention, maritime observation, humanitarian assistance, regional peace support operations, and other missions determined by the ASEAN Chairperson acting upon a unanimous recommendation from the ADMM. The ASF would be operationally and administratively controlled by an ASEAN Security Office (ASO), which would perform similar functions to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Field Support (DFS).

The ASF would mobilize forces and equipment from member states in accordance with agreed-upon timelines and configurations. Eventually, ASEAN should create a permanent ASF headquarters to plan operations and exercises and provide command and control of attached forces. During a crisis, the ADMM would have to convene frequently to monitor the ASF's operations and provide necessary guidance.

The ASF should be developed in two phases. Phase One would begin in 2015, provide a limited capability, and work out the business practices regarding the ASF's management and resourcing. Phase Two would commence in 2018, and provide a

more conventional military capability to ASEAN. When the ASF concept is first implemented, the task organization may resemble that shown in the following diagram. It includes a Security & Enforcement Team that would focus on providing the necessary security for other teams to operate and a Liaison Team to coordinate with local authorities and other organizations.

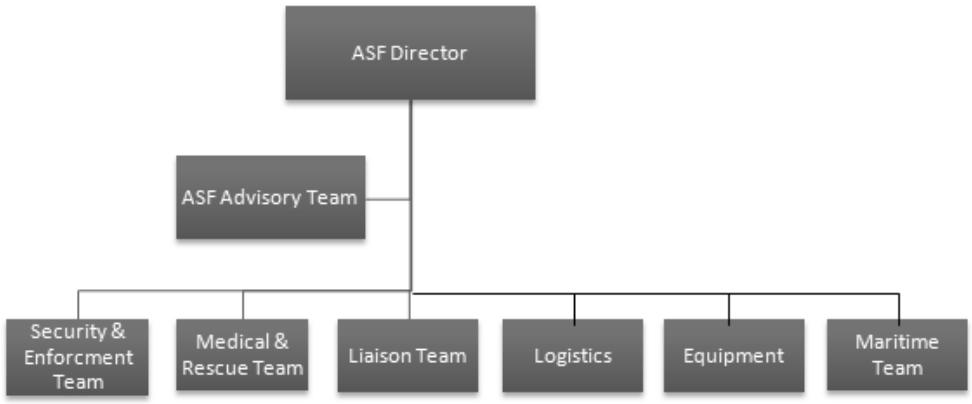

Figure 1: Organization (Phase One)

Eventually, the ASF should develop into a more robust organization, emulating a more traditional military task force as depicted below:

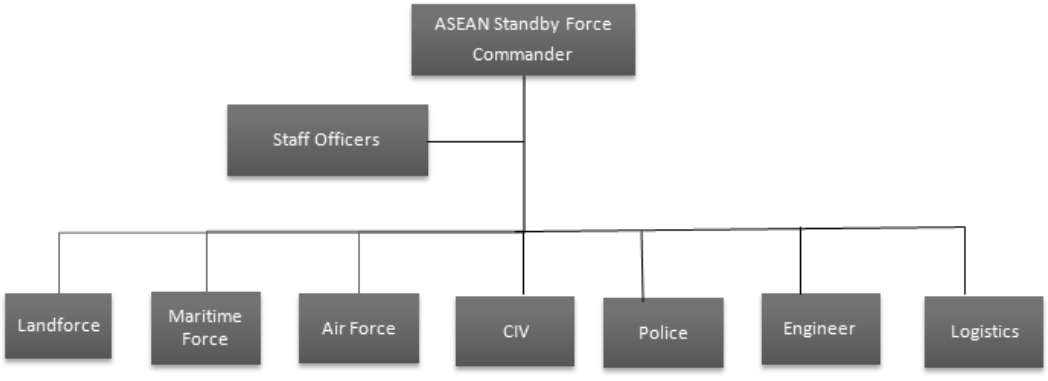

Figure 2: Organization (Phase Two)

During Phase One, ASEAN member states would be responsible for the training of their personnel and units, although the ASO would attempt to facilitate exchanges and cross-training. During Phase Two, ASEAN would conduct combined training and exercises with extensive use of regional training centers. The ASF would also participate in large scale exercises such as Cobra Gold.

Member states would provide their own equipment and most other logistical and administrative support during Phase I. Subsequently, the ASF would begin to progressively standardize equipment to support interoperability, achieve economies of scale, and enable specialization to enhance efficiency. ASEAN should develop a comprehensive program to allocate resourcing responsibilities equitably. Equipment, personnel, units, and funding should be incorporated into this calculation. For example, one country could routinely be the lead provider for medical units, another could be the backup provider for aviation units, and yet another could provide the funding for ASF operations. During Phase One, ASF units would be based at existing facilities within member states. During Phase Two, the ASF should begin creating permanent facilities throughout the region. Hosting an ASF facility could both be perceived as a benefit and a burden to the affected state.

The ASF Commander and other key leaders should be selected by the ADMM and assigned for a period of two years. These positions should circulate among the member states. Staffs at the higher levels should be composite multinational organizations, although individual countries may have a standing commitment to keep a particular billet filled.

There are, of course, numerous challenges to creating an ASF. By its very name, it seems to contradict the “ASEAN Way” and it will certainly be difficult to achieve a supporting consensus. However, if the ADMM seriously wants to achieve better ASEAN security integration, the ASF is virtually a prerequisite. The resourcing costs (funding, equipment, training, maintenance, operations, facilities) for an ASF are apt to be high, but the costs of not having an ASF could well be higher. Additionally, if designed effectively it could improve the efficiency of member states’ military spending, which is currently fragmented and often redundant when considering the region as a whole.

Deployment of the ASF must be accomplished while ensuring legitimacy, and the ASEAN Charter will have to be carefully modified to prescribe the circumstances for the ASF’s commitment. Finally, the ASF concept could generate resistance by superpowers and other actors, including domestic voices in the member states. The ASF’s creation must be accompanied by strategic communication that explains its role and value. Most would agree that an effective ASEAN capability to resolve conflict situations responsibly would be highly desirable.

Conclusion

ASEAN has long been criticized as an incapable and ill-disciplined regional organization, devoid of any mechanism for positively influencing security affairs. This perception is largely unfair, because the organization must conform to the “ASEAN Way” as it attempts to resolve issues. Indeed, the “ASEAN Way” is not the culprit; rather, ASEAN is constrained by factors addressed earlier including a lack of trust and coherence among the member states, as well as their reluctance to cede any trappings of sovereignty. The “ASEAN Way” itself was a fruit of Asian culture which is difficult to

change. However, as a group of nations united as a regional organization confronting complex modern challenges, ASEAN must somehow advance to keep pace with the rest of the world and contemporary demands. The trust and coherence between the member states must be nurtured so that ASEAN can achieve higher levels of competency.

The APSC is the most significant of ASEAN's three pillars and must be reformed with a robust security mechanism to manage regional security, protect the region's collective interests, and provide a foundation that supports progress in other sectors. A regional security mechanism is particularly necessary because of the region's geostrategic importance and its numerous security challenges.

An ASEAN Standby Force is presently a vital missing part of the regional security equation. More than a potential security trustee for Southeast Asia, it could be a medium to foster the mutual trust and coherence ASEAN currently lacks. The trust and coherence accrued from an ASF would be even more enduring than those from interest-based economic activities.

Regional security does not come easy; neither is achieving trust and coherence. ASEAN must earn all three within ambiguous and uncertain circumstances, and the ASF is a concept that can facilitate their attainment. Additionally, the ASF in effect could be a laboratory to create cutting-edge military capabilities (e.g., doctrine, leadership, operational logistics, information management, and civil-military teaming) with an Asian flavor.

Other key regional organizations have determined that they need a military capability, and despite many problems their forces have generally proven to be relevant.

Any demonstrated shortfalls have resulted in initiatives to improve capability; in no case has the idea of a security mechanism been abandoned.

Likewise, an ASF will face numerous challenges to create, resource, control, and employ it, and its formulation will require a supporting consensus from the member states—no small obstacle. Nevertheless, if these challenges are overcome the ASF can prove to be one of ASEAN's most successful chapters and can make the region and world a more peaceful place to live.

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